

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PANAMA 00567 01 OF 02 302136Z

ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 AID-05 OMB-01 HA-05 IGA-02

SAB-02 IO-13 MCE-00 /101 W

-----093055 302146Z /62

R 262245Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5431

INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 0567

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR EO TAGS SUBJECT AND GARBLED
IN LAST TWO PARA'S

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MILI PN

SUBJECT: PANAMA MILITARY RELATIONS

REF: (A) STATE 306726 (B) PANAMA 5536

1. US-PANAMA MILITARY RELATIONS, LIKE ALL OTHER ASPECTS OF US-PANAMA RELATIONS, ARE DIRECTLY TIED TO SENATE RATIFICATION OF THE CANAL TREATIES. THIS RESPONSE ASSUMES THE TREATIES WILL BE RATIFIED. THE SHARED DEFENSE OF AN IMPORTANT US SECURITY INTEREST DURING THE LIFE OF THE NEW TREATY, AND THE HIGH PROBABILITY PANAMA WILL CONTINUE TO BE RULED BY A MILITARY REGIME FOR AT LEAST THE NEAR FUTURE, MAKE EFFECTIVE AND AMICABLE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND PANAMANIAN MILITARY ESSENTIAL TO US INTERESTS.

THE RELATIONS IN RECENT YEARS BETWEEN THE TWO MILITARIES HAVE BEEN COOL AND HAVE SHIFTED TO REFLECT PANAMA'S PERCEPTION OF TREATY PROGRESS. RECENTLY THE NATIONAL GUARD HAS IMPROVED ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US MILITARY IN APPARENT ANTICIPATION OF
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PANAMA 00567 01 OF 02 302136Z

TREATY RATIFICATION. THE US' MODEST SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN PANAMA HAS BEEN A COORDINATED COUNTRY TEAM EFFORT CONSISTENT WITH THE GOALS OUTLINED AT SOME LENGTH IN REF B (PANAMA 5536).

2. THE FOLLOWING REMARKS ARE KEYED TO THE QUESTIONS IN PARAGRAPH 2 OF REF. A.

A. MILITARY TIES BETWEEN PANAMA AND THE US ARE NEEDED TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH PANAMA. THE US MILITARY HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT AVENUE OF COMMUNICATION TO THE HOST REGIME DURING EVEN THE FROSTIEST TIMES; PANAMA'S MILITARY LEADERS RELY ON THIS COMMUNICATIONS LINK, AS DOES THE US MISSION. NATIONAL GUARD LEADERS HAVE MORE AUTHORITY, AND USUALLY BETTER ACCESS TO GENERAL TORRIJOS, ON URGENT MATTERS AND MILGROUP PANAMA HAS THE PERSONAL CONTACTS NEEDED TO CAPITALIZE ON THE HOST GOVERNMENT'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PANAMA'S PARTICIPATION IN CANAL DEFENSE WILL REQUIRE CAREFUL COORDINATION BETWEEN THE TWO MILITARIES. THE NATIONAL GUARD IS NOW ESSENTIALLY A POLICE FORCE, DEFICIENT IN BOTH THE TACTICAL CAPABILITIES AND THE STAFF PLANNING NEEDED TO BECOME A CAPABLE DEFENSE FORCE. THE GUARD LOOKS NOW, AND WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK, TO THE US MILITARY TO HELP THEM IN THEIR SLOW EVOLUTION AS A DEFENSE FORCE. IT IS IN THE US INTEREST TO HELP THE GUARD OVERCOME ITS SHORTCOMINGS AND NEEDS IN ORDER TO NURTURE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE US AND PANAMA AND TO TIE PANAMA'S SECURITY AND THE CANAL DEFENSE TO THE US.

B. THE KEY MILITARY LEADERS IN PANAMA SEEK US ADVICE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND A VARIETY OF RELATED SECURITY ISSUES. THEIR IMMEDIATE INTEREST IN CANAL DEFENSE IS SPORADIC AND HYPOTHETICAL, SINCE THEY REALIZE BOTH WATERWAY DEFENSE AND THEIR OWN NATIONAL SECURITY IS GUARANTEED BY THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PANAMA 00567 01 OF 02 302136Z

US AT LEAST UNTIL THE YEAR 2000. THESE FACTORS, THE GUARD'S CASUAL APPROACH TO PLANNING AND THE CENTRALIZED CONTROL ON ALL DEFENSE RELATED ISSUES EXERTED BY GENERAL TORRIJOS MAKES WORKING WITH THE PANAMA MILITARY A TIME-CONSUMING AND OFTEN FRUSTRATING PROCESS. THESE SAME FACTORS, HOWEVER, MAKE NATIONAL GUARD LEADERS VERY SUSCEPTIBLE TO ADVICE AND PLANS THAT DO NOT SMACK OF PATERNALISM OR RUN COUNTER TO THEIR STRONG SENSE OF NATIONALISM. THE US MILITARY CAN SHAPE AND INFLUENCE THE CANAL DEFENSE AND THE PANAMA MILITARY FOR YEARS TO COME PROVIDED IT HAS THE PATIENCE AND THE FORESIGHT TO WORK WITH THEM AT THEIR HAPHAZARD PACE. GUARD LEADERS WILL LOOK TO THE US IN KEY SECURITY ASSISTANCE ISSUES AND MAY OFTEN ADOPT THE US POSITION AS THEIR OWN.

SOCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND PANAMA MILITARY ARE STILL GENERALLY POOR. THE NATIONAL GUARD LEADERS ARE SENSITIVE TO RADICALS' CHARGES OF "SELLING OUT" TO THE US MILITARY AND THEY USUALLY AVOID PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND SOCIAL OCCASIONS THAT WOULD MAKE THEM VULNERABLE TO THESE CHARGES.

C. THE NATIONAL GUARD DOES NOT HAVE AN INSTITUTIONALIZED OFFICER TRAINING AND EDUCATION SYSTEM AND IS HIGHLY DEPENDENT ON AND PROUD OF THEIR ATTENDANCE AT THE CANAL ZONE MILITARY SCHOOLS.

THESE SCHOOLS ARE WELL REGARDED BY THEM AND REPRESENT ONE OF THE BEST METHODS FOR THE US TO INFLUENCE AND TRAIN PANAMA'S FUTURE MILITARY LEADERS. PANAMA HAS INCREASED BOTH THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF THE MAJORS, CAPTAINS AND LIEUTENANTS WHO ATTEND PROFESSIONAL MILITARY COURSES IN THE CANAL ZONE. WE SEE THIS AS A POSITIVE FIRST STEP IN UPGRADING THEIR MILITARY FOR SHARED DEFENSE OF THE CANAL. THE GEORGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY OF THE SCHOOLS, LOW COST TO PANAMA AND COURSES CONDUCTED IN SPANISH MAKE THESE SCHOOLS A VERY POSITIVE AND RESPECTED MEANS OF INFLUENCING THE NATIONAL GUARD MIDDLE MANAGEMENT.

SELECTIVE TRAINING IN THE US IS ANOTHER METHOD TO STRENGTHEN US-PANAMA TIES THAT HAS BEEN USED SUCCESSFULLY. THE HIGH COST OF US TRAINING AND NEED FOR LANGUAGE TRAINING, HOWEVER, MAKE THIS CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PANAMA 00567 01 OF 02 302136Z

OPTION MORE COSTLY, ELIMINATE OTHERWISE WORTHWHILE CANDIDATES AND REDUCE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS THAT CAN BE TRAINED ANNUALLY WITH CURRENT OR PROJECTED FUNDS.

COMBINED TRAINING WITH US FORCES IN THE CANAL ZONE WILL EXPOSE THE NATIONAL GUARD TO US METHODS AND HELP UPGRADE THEIR CAPABILITIES. UNFORTUNATELY, THE SEVERE LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY PANAMA'S WEAK ECONOMY RESTRICTS THEIR ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN TRAINING, WE, WITHOUR RESOURCES, REGARD AS HAVING LITTLE OR NO COST. NEVERTHELESS, INNOVATIVE COMBINED TRAINING AND LIAISON VISITS SHOULD INCREASE DURING THE TREATY PERIOD AND BE HELPFUL TOH BOTH US AND PANAMA INTERESTS.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PANAMA 00567 02 OF 02 272243Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 AID-05 OMB-01 HA-05 IGA-02
SAB-02 IO-13 MCE-00 /101 W
-----064917 272259Z /41

R 262245Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5432

INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PANAMA 0567

D. IN THE ABSENCE OF ARMS SALES, THE US WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, TO EXERT THE TYPE INFLUENCE IT DESIRES--AND, IN ITS OWN SECURITY INTEREST, REQUIRES--WITH PANAMA UNDER THE EXISTING TREATY OR ANY NEW TREATY REPLACING IT.

PANAMA'S MILITARY NEEDS AND ITS DESIRES ARE RELATIVELY LIMITED AND APPEAR TO FALL WELL WITHIN THE SCOPE OF U.S. ARMS POLICIES. THE NATIONAL GUARD PROBABLY WILL DEVELOP, IN THE LONG TERM, A LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE (NO MORE THAN 3 INFANTRY BATTALIONS AND AN ENGINEER COMPANY), A SMALL TRANSPORT SERVICE, COST GUARD NAVY AND A SMALL, TRANSPORT-ORIENTED, AIR FORCE, WITH NO FIGHTER CAPABILITY. PANAMA'S LEADERS WANT TO PURCHASE ONLY US EQUIPMENT; GENERALLY THEY HAVE BEEN SATISFIED WITH THE US EQUIPMENT PURCHASED IN THE PAST ALTHOUGH THEY ARE HORRIFIED AT THE US'S RAPIDLY ESCALATING PRICES, LONG LEAD TIMES AND SLOW ARMS ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM. NEVERTHELESS, THEY ARE LOYAL ADVOCATES OF US EQUIPMENT AND WANT TO EQUIP THEIR MODEST FORCE ONLY WITH US PRODUCTS.

US SECURITY INTERESTS IN CANAL DEFENSE WILL BE WELL SERVED BY TYING PANAMA TO THE US IN MILITARY EQUIPMENT; IN THE PAST, THEY PURCHASED SOME SMALL ARMS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES ONLY AFTER HAVING BEEN TURNED DOWN BY THE US (68-71). IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE US TO DENY PANAMA ACCESS TO THE LIGHT INFANTRY, COMMUNICATIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PANAMA 00567 02 OF 02 272243Z

TRANSPORT THRUST OF THEIR ARMS NEEDS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME EXPECTING HARMONIOUS PANAMANIAN PARTICIPATION IN CANAL DEFENSE AND ATTEMPTING TO EXPAND OUR INFLUENCE WITH THE PANAMA MILITARY.

IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE, COMBINED CANAL DEFENSE MUST INCLUDE UNIFORMITY OF TACTICAL DOCTRINE, COMBINED TRAINING AND LOGISTICAL COMMONALITY. US POLICIES WITH PANAMA SHOULD FOSTER THIS COMMONALITY, NOT IMPEDE IT. RATIFICATION OF THE TREATIES SHOULD PLACE PANAMA IN THE ALLY CATEGORY; AT THAT TIME IT WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE TO BEGIN TO APPLY SECTION 515A OF THE 1977 SECURITY ASSISTANCE ACT (WHICH APPLIES TO SUCH ALLIANCES AS NATO) TO THE CASE OF PANAMA, RATHER THAN SECTION 515B. ALTHOUGH THE LATTER SECTION NOW TREATS PANAMA AS MERELY ANOTHER DEVELOPING-COUNTRY SECURITY ASSISTANCE CUSTOMER, IT IS MANIFESTLY TOO RESTRICTIVE TO APPLY TO THE US-PANAMANIAN DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP ENVISIONED BY THE NEW TREATIES.

E. PERSONNEL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, LEADERSHIP GRANTS AND ATTENDANCE AT US SCHOOLS CAN PLAY A LARGE ROLE IN SERVING US INTERESTS IN PANAMA. THE PANAMANIAN MILITARY LOOKS TO THE US AND WE CAN USE THESE VEHICLES TO STRENGTHEN THEIR TIES TO THE US. EXCHANGE PROGRAMS MIGHT BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL SINCE IT WOULD

INSERT SELECTED PANAMA MILITARY IN A US WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND SEPARATE THEM FROM THE INEFFICIENCY AND CORRUPTION THAT BESET THEIR OWN SYSTEM.

F. AS PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED PANAMA HAS SHOWN LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN THIRD COUNTRY PURCHASES. PANAMA IS CREDIT-POOR AND ONLY GRANTS OR EXTREMELY FAVORABLE CREDIT TERMS WOULD BE LIKELY TO WEAN THEM FROM THEIR INTENTION TO PURCHASE US EQUIPMENT.

3. THE NATIONAL GUARD WILL FALL FAR SHORT OF US EXPECTATIONS AS A DEFENSE PARTNER IN THE SHORT TERM. THEIR POLICE BACKGROUND, NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY POSSESS A US CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PANAMA 00567 02 OF 02 272243Z

DEFENSE "SECURITY BLANKET" WILL CAUSE THEM TO MATURE SLOWLY AS A TRUE DEFENSE "PARTNER." THEIR INITIAL EFFORTS WILL BE MORE FORM THAN SUBSTANCE--BUT ANY OVERT MANIFESTATION OF US PATERNALISM WILL BE RESENTED AND RESISTED. THE US CAN HELP AND GUIDE THE PANAMANIAN MILITARY AND IT IS IN THE US INTEREST TO DO SO. SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS AND CHANGE WILL PROBABLY NOT TAKE PLACE WITH THE CURRENT HIERARCHY; THEY WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK TO THE US AND BE A REASONABLY PLIANT, IF NOT NOTABLY EFFECTIVE, DEFENSE PARTNER. THEY CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE AGREEABLE AND SOMETIMES EVEN UNINTERESTED ON THE MAJOR SECURITY ITEMS, ALTHOUGH OFTEN OBSTINATE AND INDEPENDENT ON SEEMINGLY MEANINGLESS MINUTIAEA. TODAY'S MAJORS AND CAPTAINS WHO WILL GRADUALLY TAKE OVER THE NATIONAL GUARD LEADERSHIP IN THE FUTURE, HOWEVER, WILL PROBABLY BE BETTER EDUCATED AND TRAINED AND MORE INTERESTED IN SUBSTANTIVE DEFENSE ISSUES. THEY CAN BE INFLUENCED NOW THROUGH THE PROGRAMS PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED; THEY WILL BE MORE INDEPENDENT AND OUTSPOKEN AND PROBABLY MORE EFFECTIVE PARTNERS.

PANAMA-US MILITARY RELATIONS MUST CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AND IMPROVE IF WE ARE TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT AND OPERATE EFFECTIVELY UNDER THE QUASI-ALLIANCE RELATIONSHIP ENVISIONED IN THE NEW TREATIES. INCREASINGLY RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF EXISTING SECURITY ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION, WHEN APPLIED TO PANAMA EQUALLY WITH OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHERE OUR OWN MILITARY PRESENCE AND OUR DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE SECURITY INTERESTS ARE FAR LESS, ARE DETRIMENTAL TO THE VERY RELATIONSHIP WE ARE TRYING TO CREATE WITH PANAMA. THE US MILITARY PRESENCE IN PANAMA, AND OUR COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL GUARD, CAN BE A VERY POSITIVE INFLUENCE IN HELPING PANAMA ACHIEVE THE STATUS OF A RELIABLE AND COOPERATIVE ALLY THAT WE DESIRE AND NEED HERE. HOWEVER, PANAMA IS POOR AND CANNOT AFFORD TO REIMBURSE THE US FOR EVERY COMBINED TRAINING EFFORT OR GOAL THAT WE WILL URGE UPON THEM UNDER THE TREATIES-- AND WE MUST NOT FORCE THEM TO DO SO. WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT SPECIAL LEGISLATION MAY WELL BE NEEDED TO FORMALIZE THE SPECIAL DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP WE SO OBVIOUSLY NEED AND SEEK WITH PANAMA. JORDEN

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PANAMA 00567 02 OF 02 272243Z

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TREATY RATIFICATION, POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS, POLICIES, MILITARY AGREEMENTS, CANALS, MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PANAMA00567
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780048-0693, D780046-0502, D780041-0827
Format: TEL
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780119/aaaaaqcd.tel
Line Count: 284
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 673a09e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 306726, 78 PANAMA 5536, 77 STATE 306726, 77 PANAMA 5536
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3708696
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PANAMA MILITARY RELATIONS
TAGS: MASS, MILI, EWWT, MARR, PN, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/673a09e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014